

CLAIMS

1. Vacuum cleaner apparatus including a vacuum cleaner (1) with a suction inlet (3), a substantially rigid tubular cleaning wand (21) and a flexible hose (30) that can be extended and retracted in length, the hose (30) being connected at one end (32) with the suction inlet (3), and the other end (31) of the hose (30) being secured with the wand (21) and extending substantially to the forward end (22) of the wand when stowed, characterised in that a flexible outer member (40) extends externally along a part of the length of the hose and is adapted to be secured between the rear end (27) of the wand (21) and the vacuum cleaner (1) so as to retain the hose (30) in a retracted state within the wand (21) and the outer member (40).
2. Vacuum cleaner apparatus according to Claim 1, characterised in that the hose (30) is retractable by suction pressure, and that the wand (21) includes an occluder (26) for occluding air flow into the hose.
3. Vacuum cleaner apparatus according to Claim 1 or 2, characterised in that the flexible outer member is a sleeve (40).
4. Vacuum cleaner apparatus according to any one of the preceding claims, characterised in that the forward end of the hose (30) is secured adjacent the forward end (22) of the wand (21).
5. Vacuum cleaner apparatus according to any one of the preceding claims, characterised in that the wand (21) is telescopic having at least two sections (23 and 24) slidable one within the other.
6. Vacuum cleaner apparatus according to any one of the preceding claims, characterised in that the outer flexible member (40) is secured at one end with the vacuum cleaner (1) and has a coupling (41) at its other end (42) that can be coupled with the rear end (27) of the wand (21).

7. A hose assembly (2) of a hose (30), wand (21) and outer flexible member (40) for use in vacuum cleaner apparatus according to any one of the preceding claims.
8. A method of operating vacuum cleaner apparatus including the steps of applying suction to one end (32) of a flexible hose (30), using a cleaning head (20) attached to a substantially rigid wand (21) at the opposite end (31) of the hose to clean, subsequently retracting a forward part of the length of the hose (30) relative to the wand (21) and a rear part of the length of the hose relative to a flexible outer member (40), securing the flexible outer member (40) between the rear end (27) of the wand (21) and the vacuum cleaner (1) so that the hose (30) is retained in a retracted length.
9. A method according to Claim 8, characterised in that the method includes the step of occluding passage of air into the forward end (31) of the hose (30) while the vacuum cleaner (1) is operating so that suction is created within the hose (30) sufficient to retract the hose in length.